9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

881 and only those women who are nursing babies or who have reached the menopause are allowed near their hut. One or two men, often a youth 784 who was initiated the year before, and who abstain from sexual relations for the time, will keep guard over the boys to prevent their heads from falling sideways, so that the grass circle which they use as a pillow sticks to their temples and in the effort to get it loose the wounds are re-opened. They must sleep on their backs with the backs of their heads on the grass pillows. An old woman may also sleep in the hut and assist in looking [757] after the boys. Should the wounds break open and bleeding be renewed the place is cauterised with a *rip* which has been heated in the fire.

Until they are taken to the river and cleansed at the end of their seclusion the boys must strictly avoid any contact with the cattle. This is a ritual prohibition, a *biit*, which involves a curse if it is infringed. Not only are they prohibited from going among the cattle but they must even avoid treading on cattle dung. It is said that if a cow approaches them the boys must immediately run away into the shelter of their hut. It is believed that a breach of this prohibition would prevent the formation of regular scars (*piar*) on the forehead so that all the marks of initiation, the pride of manhood, would be obliterated with the exception of the *woc dohl*, the cut just above the eyebrows. In this connection Miss Huffman records of an initiate that, " When one asks him if his wounds are healed he will always say ' not yet,' but one may find out if they are really healed by asking him if he has gone among the cattle. If not, the wounds are still sore, but if he has been with the cattle it means that the wounds are well healed although the boy will not say so for fear someone with the evil eye should hear of it."[1]

881 During their convalescence the boys are given food in liberal quan-
262 tities and are probably better fed than at any other time in their lives. Considering that the Nuer is always hungry and frequently starving this abundance of food makes an impression that it is hard for us to appreciate fully. When speaking of their experiences at this period one finds that the festal nature of their convalescence is frequently stressed. They say that if any youth who has not been freshly initiated looks longingly at their food the initiates will belabour him while if it were an older man they would not strike him but neither would they invite him to partake of the meal. The boys share and share alike, as befits comrades, in any food

[1] *Op cit*, p. 32.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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000 One cannot but admire the bravery and stoicism displayed by the boy, but it is a dreadful ordeal and a most gruesome sight. How long this custom will be continued is a question one cannot answer. Knowing the Nuer, one would be almost tempted to say that it will never be discontinued as long as there remains one Nuer boy unmarked. Yet one Christian boy showed definitely that he had not the same fear of the evil eye as his companions. But until the Nuer people as a whole become Christians, there seems to be but little hope that this dreadful practice will be discontinued.

304 Near Abwong the tribal marks are not cut as deeply as they are at Nasser, and heal much more quickly.

A mother who has borne six or seven sons may have these tribal marks cut on her forehead at the same time as her youngest son has his cut. It is considered a great honour.

304 One may occasionally see a woman who has from one
757 to four cuts across her forehead, but that indicates that she has had severe eye trouble, and the cuts have been made to relieve that condition. The cuts are on the forehead only, and do not extend to the region above the ears.

143 At least one Nuer—a man—is an albino. His hair, unbleached, is flaxen. His skin is pink-white. I have heard that other members of the same family are albinos, although some of them are black, but I have seen but this one member of the family. His parents are black. Nuer have always been afraid of him, fearing that he has a god in him.

826 When he was old enough to have the tribal marks cut, no one wanted to cut them, for they feared this god that was supposed to be in him. But the boy was insistent, so finally he had the tribal marks cut, but they were

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Six

DISEASE, DEATH AND BURIAL

DISEASES AND THEIR REMEDIES

PROBABLY the greatest cause of physical distress is 164
the tropical disease which is commonly called yaws. It is prevalent throughout a large section of Nuerland, although it has not as yet invaded the Lau country.

This disease is characterized at the onset by aching in the muscles and joints, then lesions may form over various parts of the body. The mucous membrane of the mouth and nose becomes inflamed. Large ulcers may form on the limbs; when they do, the aching in muscles and joints usually stops. The bridge of the nose may be destroyed by inflammation.

Yaws is spread by contact with the discharges of the body of the person affected or discharges from the ulcers. It is not of syphilitic origin.

Sometimes the ulcers are quite large and deep; four to eight inches of tissue may be involved. Others, of course, are smaller.

The Nuer tries various treatments which have been 757
recommended to him by his elders. Certain leaves may be tied around the neck, a massage with hot water may be given to relieve the aching muscles and joints. The ulcer may be scraped with a shell, the edge of the shell having been previously sharpened. If a kernel forms in the groin due to an ulcer on the leg, a special grass is tied around the ankle to relieve it. The disease may wear itself out in time without medical care.

The Government doctors have trained some natives to 757
give the intravenous injections of the drug which is used 759
to eradicate this disease. These native men usually 651
accompany the District Commissioners on their rounds

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

757 to collect taxes, and thus come across many cases of yaws.
759 Probably few patients receive more than one injection,
651 for the Government officials do not stay long in one place, but that at least does its bit towards the healing process and also towards the prevention of the spread of this disease. And no doubt this medical work brought right to the Nuer's door, helps to alleviate the pain caused by the loss of their cattle as they are taken for the payment of taxes.

743 During the rainy season when the Sobat river is
757 navigable, and in all seasons on the Nile, the hospital boat—the *Lady Baker*—with at least one English physician and his helpers on board, provides treatment for all cases that can be reached in the towns along the rivers. Intravenous injections are given, and dressings are done. The dreadful ulcers receive one day's treatment at least. All who come to the hospital boat are treated for their various complaints. Those who wish may accompany the doctor to the hospital at Malakal, where they will receive free medical, surgical, and hospital care; they are given free transportation there and back to their villages again.

At Nasser there is a mission clinic. Here patients are encouraged to stay until they have received four of the intravenous injections and also a large daily dose of potassium iodide. Their sores are also dressed three times a week. Many, of course, leave before this course of treatment is completed, but others stay until a complete cure is effected. Skin grafts have been done at different times, three cases have been really successful.

Other remedies, such as bismuth, have been tried at this clinic, but beyond a palliative effect have been useless; the result has been time wasted for the Nuer and no definite cure. The intravenous injections were finally found satisfactory.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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757 It is surprising how quickly the ulcers respond to treatment at first. Later, when they are partly healed, the process seems to be slower, an ulcer may persist in being almost but not quite well for some time. Scar tissue breaks down easily, and the bare Nuer limb gets many a scratch and bruise which tend to cause a recurrence of the sore.

[302] When a man is downcast because a sore is slow in healing, he may bind his hair closely to the head by sewing it with cotton thread until it has the effect of a hair-net. He may wear his hair like this until his cause of distress of mind and sorrow of heart is relieved. This in itself explains to those who see him that there is a reason why he is not adorning his body, and that he is not careless about his personal appearance without cause.

One attack of yaws does not render a man immune. Of course, those who have had no complete cure of the first attack are specially subject to a recurrence of this disease.

164 Leprosy is rare among the Nuer although neighbouring tribes are subject to it.

Trachoma probably causes more trouble in Nuerland than any other disease with the exception of yaws. It is so widespread, and is the cause of much partial and total loss of sight. Many have trichiasis, but when, as in the past, there was a doctor at Nasser many were relieved of this affliction by operation. At the Government hospital at Malakal, both in the past and in the present, relief was, and is, offered to all who come.

[136] Flies are so numerous in this land that they have a very active part in the spread of disease.

Amoebic dysentery also takes its toll of life and weakens the people, although it is not as prevalent as some other diseases.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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164 Pneumonia is hard to cope with in this land, and is
757 much dreaded. As soon as the Nuer thinks that he has pneumonia he refuses to take medicine, asserting that if a victim of pneumonia takes medicine, the remedy will drive the disease all over the body instead of just letting it stay in the lungs. So the patient sits in the sunshine and the usual precautions are taken to guard him from those who might cast the evil eye upon him. Hot milk is given him to drink, if milk is obtainable. But he spends his nights shut up in a windowless house, the door being shut also, and possibly a small fire within for warmth. Many die, but some cases, even those who have had haemorrhages, have lived.

752 Sometimes when empyema follows pneumonia another Nuer will operate on the patient, opening up the pleural cavity in order to let the pus out. He may even cut the rib. The Nuer give you the name of the tree from which a twig may be cut in order to splice the rib. But I know of no one who has survived this operation. The patient is forcibly held down while this operation is in progress as they have no anaesthetics.

164 Various other diseases of more or less importance may
753 be found. Cases of what they fear is a severe stomach disorder may eventually be found to be simply due to their fear of a curse.

164 The Nuer dread smallpox; when there is any danger of an epidemic of it they are quite anxious to be vaccinated. Smallpox is usually virulent in this country, and their dread of it is justified by the fact that it takes a heavy toll of life.

Chicken-pox, measles, and mumps may also be found. I have not known of any scarlet fever or diphtheria. Tuberculosis of the lungs is rare, although tubercular bone cases may be found.

Syphilis is not common, and when found its origin

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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755 They chant, they spit and blow upon the person. A sheep or an ox may be sacrificed. If the disease is persistent, more sacrifices are offered, more chanting is done. If successful in removing the cause of the disease, or even if the people are satisfied with what he has done, the medicine man usually receives a gift of a sheep or an ox for his services. But if the patient dies while under treatment the price paid is usually returned. The medicine men, or women, as the case may be, or those who are supposed to have a god in them, reap a good harvest in sheep and cattle from those who seek their services for relief from disease.

Medicine men usually wear the hair long and may wear a beard.

● 757 One common practice that is often resorted to for curative effect is bleeding. In case of a swelling or a bruise or muscular pain, many small cuts are made at the site of the pain in order to let the blood out and presumably the pain with it.

In cases of severe colds the chest is often cut in this way. When patients so treated go to the clinic for medical aid, it is often impossible to rub the chest with oils or apply poultices on account of the effect of such medicines on these little raw cuts.

[736] 164 Scorpions and snakes abound in Nuerland, and cause a great deal of suffering, but few die of snakebite.

The Nuer do not have much malaria. Occasionally one may see a few cases among them.

DEATH AND BURIAL

888 764 The Nuer are kind to their aged and usually respect their opinions, but death in Nuerland and the details of burial are gruesome. The climate of course necessitates quick burial, so as soon as life is extinct preparations must be made.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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through adoption, and close affinity. It is also incestuous for a man 835
to have carnal relations with the daughter of an age-mate and for two closely related persons of the same sex to have congress with a person of the opposite sex, even though that person is unrelated to them. A further reason is that Nuer regard incest as a venial offence if the partners are distantly related, and young men certainly often take the slight risk involved. It is easier to understand why incest outside the family and nearest kin is not infrequent if we consider it also in a general setting of sex relations. Nuer do 836
not object to girls having love affairs before marriage so long as they are reasonably discreet in them and give their favours to youths with cattle, who may at least be supposed to have what we call honourable intentions; and little opprobrium attaches to adultery, of which they speak light-heartedly and without disgust or shame.

Nevertheless, adultery (*dhom*), besides being a wrong done to 837
the husband by infringement of his rights, is a further wrong to 783
him in that he is polluted. A husband who discovers his wife *in flagrante delicto* may obtain summary justice by spear or club. Otherwise he demands compensation in cattle, and if the two men are members of the same local community he is likely to receive it. In addition to the cattle paid in compensation, the adulterer hands over to the husband an ox called *yang kula*, the ox of the (husband's) sleeping-hide. This is paid to protect the husband from the consequences of the adultery, known as *kor*, a concept of which one also hears much in Nuerland. *Kor* is a condition brought about by a man having congress with his wife after she [753]
has been unfaithful to him. All three persons are polluted, but if sickness results it falls on the husband, and it is most likely to fall on him if the adultery took place in his home. This sickness is also called *kor*, though it may be referred to as well as *juei kula*, sickness of the hide, or, on account of its symptoms, *juei letka*, sickness of the loins. I was told that it may prove fatal, though Miss Soule says that it is myalgia of the lumbar region. Nuer told me that 837
they learnt about *kor*, as they learnt about so many of the ideas 783
discussed in this book, from the Dinka and that it was also from 177
that people that they took over a preventive and curative treatment of it, *wal kore*, *kor* medicine, the tip of a buffalo's horn [757]
which is burnt, and its smoke inhaled. Their statement that the concept is a Dinka one is supported, among other evidences, by